

One effort to answer
some of the questions of (Western only?) common sense
to the “Reimagining society project” that is hosted by Zcommunications

“No new revolutionary movement has any chance of success, and deserves none, unless it can develop an understanding of contemporary society and a vision of a future social order that is persuasive to a large majority of the population¹ ... Goals and organizational forms of any serious revolutionary left political project must take shape through active participation in popular struggle and social reconstruction. A genuine radical culture can be created only through the spiritual transformation of great masses of people, the essential feature of any social revolution that is to extend the possibilities of human creativity and freedom²... A.. practical proposal is to help to change the culture of the domestic society enough so that what should be now done could at least be made a subject of discussion³” Noam Chomsky

“Certainly, worship of the past
is not recovery of history but negation of history;
real history is not recovered
unless it enters a new life
in a new mould”
Lewis Mumford⁴

“...we would like to keep an open mind...
—by an open mind I do not mean an empty mind—
I mean that perhaps if we consider alternative theories
which do not seem a priori justified and we calculate
...we might discover that’s the way it really is”
Richard Feynman⁵

In many senses that are obvious, and many senses that will be commented in the sequel, the project of Re-imagining society has a potential role that could have major consequences in a way that begins to become possible and has never been possible so far; and it lacks some elements in ways that are so conspicuous, and so possible to fill in, that it tempts one to even phrase this as “part of the project’s strength lies in the honesty and naiveté of both what is in it and what’s missing”

Let’s start from questions that are very familiar, to at least people frequenting places like ZNet, sketch the familiar answers and proceed to the ones that are more central both to these people and to many outsiders: What’s the meaning of Re- in the project’s Re-imagining? That the project is about imagining a different society right from the start? Or that we (and who’s “we”?) have already imagined it in the past? Or both? And how about “-imagining”? To this last one, ZNet frequenters might bring to mind, as answers, things like Buber’s expression “imagining the real”, or the title of Spannos’ book “Real Utopia”, or Oscar Wilde’s line “A map of the world without Utopia on it, doesn’t deserve a second glance”, a line liked by Mumford who considered that the greatest examples of progress in human history were based on visions of alternative worlds that were worked out to find which deserved to be examples to move towards and which away from (and who also happened to, thus, see 1492 and 1917 as very similar both in the way they both made come true the old dream of trying to implement visions for society worked out by deep thinkers, and in the way they both unleashed an orgy of violence⁶, on the indigenous populations that made their new, and so resourceful, Eden less uninhabited, and on their dissidents, respectively). And why does Chomsky contribute to the project a 1970 article of his titled “Notes on Anarchism”? To give us academic background, be it for the not just academic reason of not losing time rediscovering the wheel? Or for reasons related to side effects related to violence just mentioned? Or for reasons like in Mumford’s excerpt among the mottos? Or to first give us background on what worked and what failed in all efforts, in the history so far, to displace, replace or circumvent the state and its side effects without also regenerating those side effects anew, and to and then give us food for thought to all think together whether they also applied to the proposals of the present project (e.g. Albert’s well known proposal (i.e. Parecon) to which we’re coming in a moment) or this time some new elements gave new hopes, or some new elements also gave new impasses? We’ll see parts of it functioning as answers, like also the parts of his 1969 book selected by Paul Street in his article for the Re-imagining project⁷ but now let’s just include Chomsky’s own ending paragraph: “It is not very difficult to rephrase these remarks so that they become appropriate to the imperial systems of 1970. The problem of “freeing man from the curse of economic exploitation and political and social enslavement” remains the problem of our time. As long as this is so, the doctrines and the revolutionary practice of libertarian socialism will serve as an inspiration and guide.”

To conclude the issue of Re- in the project's Reimagining , in Chomsky's "rephrasing", in Paul Street's "Recovering" (in the title of his article mentioned, see again note 7) let's just read again the two mottoes right after Chomsky's to see the way someone versed in history as deeply as Mumford is turned to the present, and the way someone who is an innovator turned to new alternatives as much as Feynman sees what a mind non-empty of experience is. And to connect to the more central and more commonsense questions let's ask the question some pieces of which are frequently asked first in the comments by readers of the presentations of the alternative of participatory economics by Albert: "Suppose Parecon's answer can take excellent care, and for quite along time, of all the problems that all other economics systems so far have had so much trouble solving. This still answers only half of the real concern. The other half is: How will it enter legislation? How will big owners give up so much property and how will state's institutions give up so much power? Just by imagining what a good future Parecon will provide for all? Or by, hopefully, becoming jealous of the, thus, contagious, happiness through non-greedy prosperity of small firms around that might have started its application?"

So let's move to the next question, that is equally central, naïve and commonsensical, but is more frequently asked because it does not presuppose one's having already heard of a proposal such as Parecon or any other; and thus a question more frequently snubbed or ridiculed by analysts and activists who are fed up with the unreality of both parts of the expression "representative democracy". Here's one way to phrase it: "We live in a world of global ecological problems, multinational entities doing the decision making, and mechanisms where, even for local problems and decisions, institutions and parameters of grand or even global scales are appealed to, both for actual reasons and for reasons of concealment. Politicians are not more equipped to face such challenges than their voters and public dialog, or dialog within parliaments as reported by media, is hardly illuminating or conducive to progress. Appointed panels of experts enjoy only a tiny fraction of trust and so the question arises: Why isn't part of the broad, or even nationwide, briefing that the state and the media consider themselves obliged to offer to the public, some periodic presentation of the questions several panels would have for some politicians and for their expert aides, and out of which the public would choose some panels to represent them? (e.g. maybe the public would like to see the answers of Bush and Cheney or of Obama, and of their panels of specialists, to some questions proposed for asking by Monbiot, Stiglitz. Akerlof and Chomsky")...*Of course to this , too, applies the objection "And how would one pass legislation to make such public dialog mandatory to politicians and media?"*, but let's first complete the question: ...Presumably, these dialogs, if continued for some time, giving the public more background and training in thinking about issues that are relevant , or even urgent, would also make the voters more ready to recognize for their worth candidates proposing completely different ways to deal with crises and impasses; and would make people with such proposals more probable to think about proposing them for more immediate implementation and not for something more eventual for whenever may, just may, be a correct time. The final question: Why is this "parliamentary" road to be snubbed (e.g. as revisionist), not tried, doomed from the outset, skipped in favor of more drastic measures towards which we must not lose time in unnecessary experiments etc etc?". The usual and main, among rational, answers to it is that probably numbers don't come out right. The number of people educated in this or other similar ways would remain subcritical for what would be needed for any change. After all, interactiveness between education and action may have worked in ancient Athens, where people were given, for free, top courses in both political criticism and self-knowledge in the form of comedies and satires, and high drama about man's "beckoning potential selves whose imitation in moments of crisis would help him overpass the mediocrity of the safe and the habitual" (Mumford's phrase for the function of the tragedies' contribution to the self-knowledge of the citizens of Athens) but very crucial differences ruin any hopeful analogy: Besides the way in which size allowed immediate, rather than representative, democracy (a difference which, OK, there are people who do not consider prohibitive but try to work out ways for how the advent of the internet can undo) there is the following crucial difference spelled out in the by K. Papaioannou in France in the

'50s⁸: the weapons that the state would use in a war, if we except besieging machines, were just the sum total of the weapons the citizens kept at home (so there was no room for politicians' jokes like "let people demonstrate as much as they want, as long as they're paying their taxes"). Of course we're not saying that if all citizens kept a rifle at home, democracy would become better! For one thing the state now can counter any group of them with weapons infinitely more powerful than the sum total of their rifles; for another, as realized already by Hegel who also wrote it, if not earlier, and as propagated by the film "The last samurai" featuring Tom Cruise, the advent of gunpowder equated thugs and bravehearts, since any of the former could kill any of the latter from a distance, so a democracy of one rifle per household would not exactly implement some noble analog of the interactive role of theatrocentric political education, but just Mad Max values or Columbine massacre barbarity).

To start moving to some answers, a more recent example would be very illuminating: Starting from some initial analysis and vision by Kropotkin, and to avoid some impasses in urban planning predicted by Geddes, Howard, in the beginnings of the 20th century worked out a plan for what was later called "greenbelt towns" (of around 30,000 people) and for the organization of small (one-digit) numbers of them into confederations. Some of those town were indeed started in England, and later elsewhere too, with very good consequences for the life and happiness of the people who lived in them. Their construction in US met very vehement opposition from the automobile industry, since one of their features (and *raison d'être*) was to cover almost all transportation needs through rapid and dense public transportation systems (Actually, some days ago, this July, the newspapers wrote about a proposal to build some more towns like that in England, in connection to the energy crisis⁹) Mumford, liking the idea a lot, and wanting to help it in his way, wrote, in the '60s, a book of more than 600 pages, "The City in History", placing the project in the broader or, more exactly, immense (but not labyrinthine) context of the history of towns since the times of the agricultural revolution and of the neolithic villages to the creation of the first huge Babylons and then Greek poleis, to the cities of the Roman and Medieval times, ...to the cities after the industrial revolution, and to the present L.A.s, New Yorks, and the conurbations; also in the context of the civilizations and cultures that lived in those towns and in the pathogenies and saving graces that have survived to our days and play a role in our current life and in determining our future; also in the context of his own overflowing spirituality, probably not unrelated to his quite rationally argued preference for realistic models inspired from biology, rather than for crude pseudoanalogs from physics in things like analyses of economics and city planning; and all that done in a language and format accessible to the layman, not needing any prerequisite whatsoever, but constituting itself an educational experience equivalent to many university courses, and providing the general reader with a background helping him to many other things that would otherwise need prerequisites in order to be read. As one might guess the point of mentioning this well known story in the present context too is to just say "imagine what boost in both thinking/clarity/inspiration/ideas and enthusiasm/morale it would be if Mumford lived and placed the project of "Reimagining society" in a wider context too, maybe himself feeling this was an even better suited plan to express all his vision. So? Should we say "Unfortunately he died in 1990 (not prematurely! He died at 95). No!!! This would both contradict his line we saw in the motto and a couple more of, quite easy to think and agree, truths that make us just say "Fortunately, no such remake is necessary". Here's why: 1. The context he placed that effort in is still functional¹⁰, 2. He wrote that more or less we've come to the end of the days where just one person, no matter how much of a homo universalis he might be, could analyze with all the parameters and from all the angles necessary the issues that are relevant in the current society; in his opinion, only a collective author could do that after some point. To the extent that the role of this collective author cannot be played by the collectivity automatically constituted by the collective project "Reimagining society" and by the plans for comments, discussions, future publications etc that are announced on its front page, maybe some more personalized coordinating entity should play a role, but until some person doing that shows how even better this could be done through his efforts, we consider that mere excerpts from Mumford's books are quite capable of functioning that way¹¹.

So let's see where we stand now: 1. We said enough to see what possibly effective thing, in a nutshell, could mean the phrase of, among many others Mumford too, "right now humanity finds itself in a race between universal education and universal destruction" 2. We have addressed people who do not snub the insistence to first at least try parliamentary roads to change, and only if they repeatedly fail, either give up or turn to more drastic measures, depending on their psychological constitution or the data of the time they will decide such things. 3. We have seen as a worthwhile analog of the ancient interactiveness between education and social intervention, or at least as a worthwhile trial for such analog, the way broad education for broad parts of the population would intervene through people recognizing among candidates some new, knowledgeable and trustworthy persons, running for positions of decision makers, and through such persons judging they do stand a chance if they ran for them (the case where this could lead to just "OK, the party's over" effect, or the effect "OK, free speech allowed only as long as it doesn't change a thing", being taken care, through so-to-speak the familiar joke "How would Obama make himself immune to the danger of being killed in case he tried some real change? He should have proposed Chomsky as vice president. Who would kill Obama to let decision making to Chomsky? And who could kill both of them in quick succession without risking make rise the question and the dilemma (and in a, possibly not subcritical anymore, number of people) of whether measures more drastic than parliamentary roads to change should be tried?. In idioms less comix-like and more ZNet-like this is the familiar line said by William Blum "If I were a US president and wanted to end terrorism in three days I would ask pardon of all nations US harmed on day 1, say Israel is not a state of US on day 2, stop arms production and with money saved pay reparations and compensations on day 3, and get assassinated on day 4". OK, this was quoting briefly and by memory, for the exact wording, and the reference see note 12)

4. In upshot we have outlined the pacifist anarchist's position "The analog of the weapons that ancient Athenians kept at home is the education that all can be given, for free, at home by top thinkers and top artists caring to help people dedicate their best self to saving their home planet and helping their fellow humans¹³ like in other times the best hearts and minds of each generation dedicated their best self to their home country and to their fellow citizens, or to efforts helping people broadly (like Pasteur's or Fleming's), or used, for any possible such effect on social purposes, the name they had acquired through art or through purist's research (e.g. Beethoven, or Einstein before ending up having his name entrapped in the effort to generate public consent for the bomb. We'll make a brief return to this)

At the beginning we hinted at some possibility that our age is ideal for such notions whereas no other age was. As one may have guessed this has the following two components (at least two): 1. Iraq on the one hand and the economic crisis on the other, even as recounted in regular mainstream media, have rendered unnecessary long academic preambles, rigorous proofs, brainstorm with background etc, to convince anybody that it is not ideological or psychological (even idiosyncratic and eccentric) predilections, or any other sources of biased opinions, that lead one to the suspicion that something is fishy with capitalism or the multinationals or the proposed and recycled decision makers, that it is not probable that all these factors are fine and yet the disasters happen just like bad weather (of good old times too. Before the climate change). 2. Our age has (relatively) affordable computers, internet and google (when Mumford was outlining their role in the hope he placed on universal education, he still had to be a little JulesVerne-like about it but now it's known to small kids); our age also has ZNet (irrespective of what hopes one places or does not place on Parecon, or of how the "Reimagining.."project will end up, who doesn't know how grateful we all should be to Albert and coworkers for even just ZNet?) ZNet, and antiwar.com and truthout.org and ... and... have also contributed to the following concept's being taken for granted as it should: there are education and information centers that give their services, for free, to all and whoever has the understanding, the pleasure and the means donates to keep them in existence (as much as one's means do not start conflicting with his pleasure. Just like one rewards musicians and minstrels on sidewalks and in subways); maybe I haven't looked in it hard enough to know if the following impression is true, but I feel that the well known point made, 20 years ago, about the eclipse of "public intellectuals" by Russell Jacoby in his "The Last

Intellectuals” must be also complemented by stating that the reason why that eclipse was not, finally, even darker was the advent of the ZNet-like mechanisms (we mention Jacoby’s point briefly in note 14 for someone who happens not to have heard it); finally our age starts to develop reading gadgets, that can be made even more affordable, and at the same time friendly to old timers who want to just read, with no keyboard or internet services, by just sticking a CD in a book-like object they can open on their thigh while sitting, something that (apart from the well known ecological advantages and disadvantages discussed in the press about it and apart from the possibly deleterious effects all electronic journalism can have on the seriousness of the information offered, as is currently so intensely discussed) can make education very cheap, since even things with prohibitive cost (e.g. with many colored photos) can, with no restriction, be given out, and reproduced, practically as cheaply as buying a void CD, placing a “public intellectual” and broad classes of persons seeking broad education into a new, and almost unmediated by usual market mechanisms, and also personal, relation of voluntary support/donation and voluntary service/gift (for dangers to quality see note 15)

We haven’t yet discussed the effect of format on making education more widely accessible; maybe it’s obvious, or expected, or indifferent, that the present author would opt for theatrical formats, not excluding the possibility others can prove that other formats are better, and of course, never excluding points made in formats not widely reader-friendly, yet more substantial than the points affordable by people who can afford idioms more widely accessible. The obvious way to harmonize the abilities inherent or cultivated in people from different walks of life is obviously of the form, e.g., “the one has the IQ and background to spell out a mechanism and its implications but can’t afford an idiom to say it to all but only to readers of rigorous essays, the other has the IQ and background to just afford to understand such points and gauge their importance when he sees the points ready made but can put them in idioms and formats closer to simpler minds, like himself. So they just collaborate, by one, or both, reading the other. (Obviously it’s the artist who sure mustn’t skip the contribution of the thinkers. The converse doesn’t need anything to be mandatory about it!) Before we give an example of how an e.g. Mumfordian point sounds on stage (through the playwright having reached a similar point (but through readings quite different from Mumford!)) let’s complete the discussion on the role of education through including some more thoughts made by Chomsky, on the one hand in the article “Notes on Anarchism” again and on the other hand in a 2007 interview to Schivone. We re-include his thoughts we saw in the motto to see once more the words “majority” and “spirituality”:

“No new revolutionary movement has any chance of success, and deserves none, unless it can develop an understanding of contemporary society and a vision of a future social order that is persuasive to a large majority of the population ... Goals and organizational forms of any serious revolutionary left political project must take shape through active participation in popular struggle and social reconstruction. A genuine radical culture can be created only through the spiritual transformation of great masses of people, the essential feature of any social revolution that is to extend the possibilities of human creativity and freedom...Given the highly conservative cast of our highly ideological society, it is not too surprising that the United States has been relatively untouched by these developments. But that too may change. The erosion of cold-war mythology at least makes it possible to raise these questions in fairly broad circles. If the present wave of repression can be beaten back, if the left can overcome its more suicidal tendencies and build upon what has been accomplished in the past decade, then the problem of how to organize industrial society on truly democratic lines, with democratic control in the workplace and in the community, should become a dominant intellectual issue for those who are alive to the problems of contemporary society, and, as a mass movement for libertarian socialism develops, speculation should proceed to action...A practical proposal is to help to change the culture of the domestic society enough so that what should be now done could at least be made a subject of discussion...There are really some moral truisms. One of them is that opportunity confers responsibility. If you have very limited opportunities, then you have limited responsibility for what you do. If you have substantial opportunity you have greater responsibility for what you do. I mean, that’s kind of elementary, I don’t know how it can be discussed. And the people who we call ‘intellectuals’ are just those who happen to have substantial opportunity. They have privilege, they have resources, they have training. In our society, they have a high degree of freedom—not a hundred percent, but quite a lot—and that gives them a range of choices that they can pursue with a fair degree of freedom, and that hence simply confers responsibility for the predictable consequences of the choices they make..” (For the last passage google “ZNet, Chomsky, Schivone, War and responsibility, August 16 2007” . Also discussed there, is whether the Nuremberg judges applied, for crimes of war, double standards like today’s)

So now let's outline an example of theatrical intervention or at least concurrence and/or parallelism to the course of events: one might bring to mind, parallel to both Bush-Cheney terms and to Obama's, Max Frisch's "Biderman and the arsonists" of the '60s where someone gets burned, even helping the arsonists to get the materials with which they set his house on fire, because he e.g. thinks they can't possibly be the arsonists mentioned in the evening news because in that case they would not let themselves be so obvious to him. Or one might bring to mind Zinn's "Marx in Soho" (which, by the way, right before I started the present page, a youth I met mentioned to me as a terrific example of how many groups of 300 at a time, in many towns in succession as a theater was traveling, had the feeling, among other feelings too of course, that they had read scores of interesting books which, otherwise, they would never have the chance, or even desire, to sit down and read). But we said that we wanted to show something that in a sense shows on stage something overlapping some ideas of Mumford's: Mumford considered that it was Hitler who had won the 2nd World War because who wins is not who survives physically at the end but he whose ideas and methods are finally adopted by, or imposed on, society. And since the atom bomb was used, and on civilians, and since some of Hitler's experts were given the choice to skip Nuremberg if they agreed to work for US intelligence and pass on to them some methods, therefore Hitler won. Mumford had also made the conjecture, which seems to be verified by news in the last 3-4 years, that the way the Russians had made an atom bomb in zero time after the war, was that Americans knew of only the Heisenberg group of atomic scientists, but maybe other scientists, possibly notified by them before they were put under surveillance, rushed to Russia to help make the bomb and end up with an equilibrium of terror at least, rather than with the one side's unreinable rule. (Those other physicists knew of the progress, and the progress was more that the one reported to Hitler because Heisenberg's group did not want to help him win. And they didn't want, either, the other side's scientists to give the bomb to any military whatsoever. But after they saw that they did give it, and that the US military did use it, and on civilians, they, or some of them, switched to the alternative plan just mentioned). Let's outline the well-known play "Copenhagen" that its first time around, in London, happened to be concurrent with NATO's "humanitarian bombings" in Yugoslavia in 1999 (for which Chomsky was writing at the time that they were the equivalent of the Mafioso of the neighborhood going around and breaking a couple of the arms he was twisting to give the message he was not joking when pushing, but at a scale describable as "the new state of things is that around the globe, above a height, an umbrella of arms has been installed and US is like a Jahve not always just, not even sane, and very often angry..." (quoted by memory, not verbatim, and lacking the precise reference in a newspaper)). It's not without importance to note that Michael Frayn, the playwright, is the same playwright who had written, more than 30 years ago, the famous hilarious comedy "Noises off". In our summary we won't be going back and forth between the characters, but one character will say, in one breath, all that she (and her husband) said in the play and then another character will say, in one breath, all that he answered her in the play (the characters are Bohr's wife, Bohr, and Bohr's ex student Heisenberg). Their discussion takes place in the heaven, in afterlife: "When I realized you came to Nazi occupied Denmark to fish your ex teacher's advice with Nazi escort I got so mad and even spooky that I stopped believing in human nature. You had father-to-son relation with your teacher, you wrote history together doing top rate work in physics, you enjoyed music together, you were playing with our baby son on your knees, you knew how grieved your teacher was because we had lost that son to an accident in which he drowned in front of his father's eyes, yet you did come to fish advice for Hitler's bomb.."

"My hope was that instead you would have said to my teacher "A person who played with the son he knows we lost, a person that did top rate work with you and had a father-to-son relation with you can't possibly have come to fish advice from you to help the Nazis who occupy our country. If these things were true I would stop believing in human nature. Something else must be going on" and then my teacher would have said "The question he asked me is an undergraduate's question. He would have solved that with closed eyes when he was in high school, at twenty he was doing Nobel prize level work. Either his mind gets blocked when he works for Hitler or something else is the case as you too say. So he must be giving a message which he phrases like a physics question to confuse the Nazi escort, he says that he plays cretin as head of the atom bomb project, so he is sabotaging it, so we must

escape to Los Alamos but not to help them to hand over the bomb to the US generals before he hands his bomb to Hitler's generals but in order to tell them there is no race with Hitler, and that this weapon should never be constructed". Yet neither of you got the message. You escaped under spy-film conditions to US and helped make the bomb there. The American atom bomb was not sabotaged like the German one was, by me who had not resigned because the next head of the project might be someone who would not want to sabotage it. And not only was the American bomb constructed but also used against human targets and not on a desert little island as a display of force and proof that the bomb did exist as physicists had proposed to Roosevelt in order to start the project using Einstein as their most authoritative and thus most convincing representative in that famous letter he wrote to Roosevelt from Princeton. And not only was it used against human targets but these targets were civilians; and were bombed after Japan's surrender. As also civilians were the more than one hundred thousand people Churchill had bombed in Germany after Germany's surrender. Yet it was me who later was considered a criminal, for collaborating with Hitler, and not with my overseas colleagues. And OK, I would not so much miss their handshake in physics conferences, nor would I so much miss the appreciation by my compatriots of my caliber as a physicist for not having the German bomb in time, but if a German asks me "well, for you, a German, Germany was not only Hitler as it wasn't for so many of us, either. Germany was also our childhood friends and also it was the German civilization", like I and Planck had said to ourselves and we didn't leave like Austrian and Jewish physicists correctly did, and we stayed to help Germany as we should, well if a German asks me that then I sometimes do get a hind dilemma which I then knew I shouldn't have. The worst thing is that there are other physicists that still do not, or do not yet, have the opposite dilemma and this is very bad for the future of mankind.."

After that discussion the world is not saved from further nuclear worries, of course, but at least Bohr's wife believes again in human nature; but only when they're in heaven, on earth these explanations were never given, Frayn came too late, for them as persons, but hopefully early enough, or in the nick of time, for the application of their points to their and our collective concerns.

The reason for including the above was twofold, or rather threefold if we include its utmost inherent importance and interest. To show what it means to theaterize a point in order to circulate it much more widely. And to show, on the act rather than through explanation of how it comes about, why it does make sense to circulate dialogs that were never made. Now let's go back to our initial and immediate concern for the sake of which the above train of thoughts and examples was given:

Of course, no Bush or Cheney or Obama or expert of their panels and think tanks will ever show up and have nationwide live talk with in front of Larry King with Monbiot, Stiglitz, Akerlof and Chomsky. This would be educational but the way to educate through making it to the news (and only through having the time to drop a couple of lines at most) is to first kill some John Lennon (as the guy who said he killed him to impress a girl not paying attention to him and to whom he had said she would see him on TV) or to become a bin Laden or, if you're (in comparison) a pacifist, of the Putin variety, bomb the country of an idiot like Saakashvili who attacks a neighbor believing US would follow his decisions. Persons that are not decision makers cannot make it to the news to put public dialogs on that screen, they can only put their public dialogs on theatrical stages and screens. But: would it not be very educational if one circulated dialogs he imagined between Monbiot/Stiglitz/Akerlof/Chomsky and the politicians+their thinktanks? The arguments on the one side of the table do not even have to be imagined, they can very well be factual, borrowed from their articles on ZNet or elsewhere. But doesn't it half the relevance and the liveness of the presentation compared to the one that would happen if one side was factual and the other virtual? Of course, but it also doubles it compared to the one that happened just above where both sides, Bohr's wife and Heisenberg were virtual (and in afterlife). And since that one, some readers agreed, was educational and valuable, why not a try an example of the half virtual half factual variety too? A last misgiving: Wouldn't the absent have the right to protest that they were misrepresented? Answer: They can always show up and represent themselves where they think that their screen representatives' performance was poorer than their own performance in real life, and they can always improve their own performance in real life where they think was poorer than their screen representatives' performance. Thus?: We borrowed, as title and 1st page, the famous expression and photo "Mount Bushmore" from American analysts/cartoonists¹⁶ and wrote for the web¹⁷ a "farcitragedy in soap opera format". To go straight to a summary see note 18

Notes:

1. Borrowed from Paul Street's ZNet article "Re-Imagining and Recovering Revolutionary Socialism" of July 13, 2009 written for "Re-imagining society" that borrowed it from Chomsky's "Some Tasks for Responsible People" (August 1969), for more details see Street's article.
2. Same as 1 just above.
3. ZNet, Noam. Chomsky to Albert, December 27 2006
4. Either in "The City in History", or in "The Myth of the Machine" or in "Values for Survival" or in "The Transformation of Man" (I haven't read anything else by Mumford. But my search machine can't locate which of the four excerpt archives contains it since it is not verbatim but just entered by memory")
5. In "Feynman's Lectures on Gravitation"
6. The deeper reason for that he diagnosed to lie in the "heavy baggage" they both carried from their past and consisting in the total lack of historical and psychological self-understanding of their societies.
7. We mean the first two quotes in the opening motto here, which as we said in notes 1,2 are borrowed from Street's recent ZNet article "Re-Imagining and Recovering Revolutionary Socialism" (July 13, 2009)
8. Papaioannou says he borrows that insight from Plato with one change: Plato spelled out the role of theater to accuse Athens (and say it was ruled by "theatrocracy"). Papaioannou borrows the insight but to praise Athens for that. The book in which he wrote these things was "Mass and history" ,published posthumously in Greek (in 2003), but many of its points had been included in other books of his written in French (his point about "theatrocracy" I have seen only in "Mass and history" but I've not read all of his other books)
9. We have not yet checked the extent to which this overlaps or continues the initial proposal.
10. Quite literally so: by just removing things that concern the issue of its title about cities so specifically that nothing is drawn for other issues too, one finds again a ready made context for many similar projects. (There are such things, very specific on cities, in "The City in History" since it was written to help urban planning too !!).
11. I would be happy to send anybody an excerpt of this kind suited to his needs if he asks me for one and tells me where his Mumford related interests lie, e.g. through the comment section of the site of note 17 below.
12. "If I were the president, I could stop terrorist attacks against the United States in a few days. Permanently. I would first apologize -- very publicly and very sincerely -- to all the widows and orphans, the tortured and impoverished, and all the many millions of other victims of American imperialism. Then I would announce that America's global interventions have come to an end and inform Israel that it is no longer the 51st state of the union but -- believe it or not -- a foreign country. I would then reduce the military budget by at least 90% and use the savings to pay reparations to our victims and repair the damage from our bombings. There would be enough money. Do you know what one year's military budget is equal to? One year. It's equal to more than \$20,000 per hour for every hour since Jesus Christ was born. That's what I'd do on my first three days in the White House. On the fourth day, I'd be assassinated". Borrowed from: American Empire For Dummies. A talk given in Boulder Colorado by William Blum, October 21, 2002 ZNet
13. For Chomsky's own description of what's driving him personally see his interview to Navarro, I think one year ago...yes: it was ZNet, July 25 2008 (today is July 22)
14. Jacoby had written that the reason why no next generation of Mumford-like intellectuals is going to show up is that with the changes of rewards-to-living-cost-ratio that make it impossible to live on translating and writing articles and books, intellectuals would have to apply for academic positions, thus write for peers rather than in non-technical jargon comprehensible to the wider public (since tenure is based on technical publication list and since additional, "not equally rigorous" contributions are of dubious importance) thus stop influencing people, thus not be taken into consideration by decision makers, thus not have consequences on any policy... (Thus only Chomsky-like or Herman-like or Monbiot-like or Blum-like individuals etc who could, concurrently, do two things well, academia+writing could survive as potential influencers yet ,at so reduced numbers that influence becomes an oxymoron or, as Chomsky puts it (quote by memory, not verbatim) "Not to have illusions, we are allowed to exist exactly because we only have subcritical influence and thus serve the impression that free speech exists. That we continue is a result of thinking out if we offer more by talking than by not talking..." (Also I haven't checked if all the above names are in academia too. But the point is clear). Let's also briefly comment a familiar and somewhat neurotic and funny rationalization often made, more through stance than through words, by academics when judged for their positions on an issue or, more often, their lack of positions on an issue: "I don't feel I have to answer to people of less important academic achievement than me. Their arguments don't count to me and my equals, let an equal of mine repeat them to me and I will answer". Well, if they are not the kind of persons who could do well two things (one of which , being a citizen too, would become mandatory in other societies through contempt upon its absence) then their achievement is based on being moronized in their other function, and if their adversary was an equal he too would have been moronized and would have nothing to oppose to them. To Chomskies who are their "equals" their stance is as infantile as follows: "Why is he entitled to express opinions on such things? Is he an expert? He's a linguist! Has he a degree in Political Science?")
15. The argument that everybody becomes an author if he states so, if cheap ways to spread books are devised, is not so waterproof: Does one really need an editor's hesitations in front of futile investment expense to have quality control by book reviewers trustable by readers? For interest groups like authors-readers-bookreviewers sharing a common ideal, e.g. change (especially if the change includes free market mechanisms) why can't responsible book-reviewing happen at prices reduced through electronic mechanisms like the book prices?
16. Clicking at the bottom of the photo seen through note 18 leads to its sources.
17. www.johnalevizos.net that started Jan.2008. Don't mind the too name-like site-title. It mostly excerpts others.
18. Google with: *Mount Bushmore. "Tho' obscur'd, this is the form of the Angelic Land". William Blake ("America"). "...It was in the theater that* (The summary of the whole, lo-o-ong soap serial, is only 3 pages, font size 10)

PS: Added remarks: 1. In the list of expressions involving imagination, in the second paragraph of page 1, the book title “The imaginary institution of society” is absent because the parts of that book’s content for which it is usually cited are mostly the ones that do not make it irreplaceable but can be found in many other treatises and books. 2. To the last page’s last paragraph we add that another legitimate way to educate through the news is to throw a couple of shoes to a US president, the most pacifist approach when compared to the rest of the approaches cited there, but among the effects Al Zaidi’s such move, some months ago, had on the collective conscious the most practical was just to make some American journalists propose to American citizens to send by registered mail a shoe to the White House and imagine the effect in case a huge hill formed, not something more effective. 3. Additions to the “Mount Bushmore” summary (added in other sites of mine that were made after the Bush-Obama change) will be added to the comment section of the site of note 17.